



MOUNT LAUREL SCHOOLS

**K-8 Gifted & Talented
Education Program**

MISSION

The Mount Laurel School District is committed to providing gifted learners from all backgrounds the support and resources necessary to reach their full potential.

Our gifted program delivers differentiated services designed to motivate and challenge students whose abilities differ significantly from their peers.

Students develop and utilize their gifts to become contributing members of an ever changing global society.

OVERVIEW

Gifted learners come from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and possess unique abilities. These learners exhibit the potential to achieve in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas. They may possess strong leadership capacity or excel in specific academic fields. Gifted learners are a unique segment of the district's student population who require educational alternatives that teach, challenge, and expand their knowledge, while simultaneously developing their identity as independent and self-directed learners who continuously generate questions, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas.

The Gifted Academic Program (G.A.P.) actively supports the Mount Laurel School District's commitment to academic and personal success for every student through the use of effective instructional practices, innovative resources, and ongoing professional staff development. The program's identification process, curriculum, and instructional practices are reviewed annually.

The Mount Laurel School District recognizes the special needs of gifted learners and offers a continuum of services which supports the entire school program through enriched and specialized learning opportunities to develop student skills in the following areas:

- Content Knowledge and Inquiry - Students engage in challenging learning experiences aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and conduct research and analysis and independent study.
- Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving - Students use higher level thinking to identify local and global real-world issues and to develop and communicate solutions to these problems.
- Leadership and Identity - Students build self-direction and independence through flexible learning experiences which empower students to pursue areas of interest and aptitude. Through self-reflection and work with peers, students develop a deeper understanding of community and responsibility.
- Social and Collaboration - Students continuously interact with peers and the broader school community. Affective education supports the unique social emotional needs of gifted learners.

DEFINING GIFTEDNESS

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Definition

Students with gifts and talents perform - or have the capability to perform - at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential.

Student with gifts and talents:

- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.
- Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.
- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent.
- Require varied services based on their changing needs.

Federal Definition

"Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities."

New Jersey Definitions - N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3

"Gifted and talented students" means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

"Instructional adaptation" means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling students with disabilities, ELLs, or students in alternative education programs or who are gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and/or demonstrate knowledge and application of the NJSL

Additional information on NJ Statutes and Regulations can be found here:

<https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/gandt/regs.htm>

Mount Laurel Township Schools policy for gifted education [6171.2]:

The chief school administrator shall develop and the board shall approve criteria for identifying all gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12. The identification process shall include multiple measures. Gifted and talented students shall be provided with appropriate instructional adaptations and services to encourage development of their special abilities in achieving the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

(See policy attached at end of this document)

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

There are many common characteristics of giftedness, but each learner may exhibit his or her own unique traits differently. Gifted learners do not exhibit these traits in every area, but instead have their own unique patterns and attributes.

Social & Emotional Issues

Although gifted children may demonstrate greater maturity in some areas, they may be at a greater risk for specific kinds of social-emotional difficulties if their needs are not met. Anxiety, perfectionism, stress, peer relationships, and identity present challenges for many gifted learners.

According to the NAGC, it is important to remember the following in regards to giftedness:

- A child gifted in one area does not mean gifted in all
- Giftedness can lead to the masking and misunderstanding of problem signs
- Not all gifted children are alike, including their own unique social-emotional profile
- There is no single, definitive recipe for maintaining a child's emotional equilibrium
- Parents need to model balance and set the tone to reduce stress/anxiety in the gifted child's life
- We can teach our children strategies and provide tools for dealing with the ebb and flow of life

This list of traits taken from the NAGC is organized into four sub-categories and provides examples of characteristics often exhibited by gifted learners.

Cognitive	Creative	Affective	Behavioral
Keen power of abstraction	Creativeness and inventiveness	Unusual emotional depth and intensity	Spontaneity
Interest in problem-solving and applying concepts	Keen sense of humor	Sensitivity or empathy to the feelings of others	Boundless enthusiasm
Voracious and early reader	Ability for fantasy	High expectations of self and others, often leading to feelings of frustration	Intensely focused on passions—resists changing activities when engrossed in own interests
Large vocabulary	Openness to stimuli, wide interests	Heightened self-awareness, accompanied by feelings of being different	Highly energetic - needs little sleep or down time
Intellectual curiosity	Intuitiveness	Easily wounded, need for emotional support	Constantly questions
Power of critical thinking, skepticism, self-criticism	Flexibility	Need for consistency between abstract values and personal actions	Insatiable curiosity
Persistent, goal-directed behavior	Independence in attitude and social behavior	Advanced levels of moral judgment	Impulsive, eager and spirited
Independence in work and study	Self-acceptance and unconcern for social norms	Idealism and sense of justice	Perseverance — strong determination in areas of importance
Diversity of interests and abilities	Radicalism		High levels of frustration — particularly when having difficulty meeting standards of performance (either imposed by self or others)
	Aesthetic and moral commitment to self-selected work		Volatile temper, especially related to perceptions of failure
			Non-stop talking/chattering

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

The identification process involves three main steps:

1. Student screening
2. Gifted identification testing
3. Student placement determination

Placement Process and Procedures

Universal student screening provides an inclusive process which considers all students. Screening establishes a pool of students who potentially qualify for gifted services and includes students new to the district, students who speak a primary language other than English, and students who have special needs or disabilities.

Multiple measures of academic and cognitive data are collected, analyzed and then compared with normed local peer groups. This process identifies student strengths in content areas, as well as verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative skills in reasoning and problem solving. The following describes the three different areas of cognitive ability measured:

- Verbal assessments test a student's vocabulary as well as comprehension, verbal memory, and ability to understand and discover word relationships. These include analogies, sentence completion and classification.
- Quantitative assessments measure student's abstract reasoning and problem solving abilities involving numbers. This involves solving number series, number puzzles, and number analogies.
- Nonverbal assessments test a student's reasoning ability using spatial and figural content. These include exercises with figure matrices, paper folding, and figure classification.

Students who qualify for the program receive recommendations for services based on their level of need. Depending on the recommendation, students may receive specialized differentiation, push-in support and/or pull-out programming.

Screening Timeline

Student screening occurs annually in the spring for all current second and fourth graders, including students already participating in the program. Determinations are completed prior to September. Kindergarten screening occurs mid-year with determinations made by the end of the 2nd marking period.

Students new to the district are screened upon entrance.

Placement Criteria

As outlined by the National Association of Gifted Children, data obtained from an assessment does not guarantee placement into a gifted program. The record sheets attached below outline the multiple measures used in achievement and ability assessments used in making placement determinations. Student scores are reviewed to identify learning needs of the student to determine if additional supports are needed in addition to those provided within the general education classroom. Optional measures are used at the discretion of the review committee as needed to acquire additional information.

Grades K-2

Student Name:
DOB:

Grade:
Teacher:

	Minimum Score	Student Score	Comments	Criteria met? Y/N
KBIT-2 (Aptitude)	125			
Verbal	125			
Nonverbal	125			
Composite	125			
F&P				
Instructional Reading Level	Above grade level			
Teaching Strategies Gold	Above grade level			
Additional Measures (Optional)				
Creativity Assessment				
Teacher Rating Scale				
Creativity				
Learning				
Initiative				
Leadership				
Product / Performance / Portfolio				
Interview Notes				
Selection Committee Recommendations				

Grades 3-8

Student Name:
DOB:

Grade:
Teacher:

	Minimum Score	Student Score	Comments	Criteria met? Y/N
CogAT (Aptitude)				
Cognitive - Verbal	9th Stanine/ 96th percentile			
Cognitive - Quantitative	9th Stanine/ 96th percentile			
Cognitive - Nonverbal	9th Stanine/ 96th percentile			
STAR (Achievement)				
Reading	97th percentile			
Math	97th percentile			
F&P				
Instructional Reading Level	Above grade level			
Additional Measures (Optional)				
Creativity Assessment				
Teacher Rating Scale				
Creativity				
Learning				
Motivation				
Leadership				
Product / Performance / Portfolio				
Interview Notes				
Selection Committee Recommendations				

Gifted and Talented Instruction

Tiered Services

Program services are designed to meet the needs of identified gifted or high-aptitude learners and may differ based on the learning needs of each student.

The tiered framework detailed below integrates elements of differentiated learning into the general education classroom and provides opportunities for students in need of additional opportunities and resources in particular areas where student strengths are demonstrated.

Tier 1: Enrichment and Consultation- Services for ALL students

This model provides an opportunity for the classroom teacher and gifted and talented specialist to collaborate on modifications to specific assignments or units for students within the general education instructional program. This consultation supports many students who would benefit from leveled and tiered curriculum materials and assignments. Students participate in classroom experiences which may include supports such as independent projects, differentiated learning centers, and flexible grouping. Whole class enrichment activities provide opportunities for differentiated group and independent learning experiences.

Tier II: Enrichment and Specialized Services

Tier II services are designed to support the student who requires additional services beyond the traditional classroom. Learning experiences for these students may include assembly programs, guest speakers, field trips, interest-based clubs, or additional coursework. Some Tier II students may be identified for “pull-out” instruction to work on specific goals. Gifted and Talented specialists provide opportunities for students to develop self-directed learning skills, research authentic problems or topics, and communicate what they have learned to an audience.

Tier III: Acceleration or Advancement

Advanced classes, mentorships, differentiation and independent study may be options for students who have been identified for the gifted and talented program and require additional support.

Grades K-2

- Identified students receive differentiated instruction in the general education classroom with a gifted program teacher consulting with the classroom teacher to provide support in identifying material which enhances critical and creative thinking skills.
- Students identified will receive differentiated whole class enrichment from the gifted and talented specialist in collaboration with the classroom teacher through a push in model.
- Students identified as needing additional support may receive individualized opportunities within the classroom provided by the gifted and talented teacher with collaboration from the classroom teacher.

Grades 3-4

Students identified for pull-out programming will meet in small groups with the gifted and talented specialist as follows: Students meet twice per cycle week with the Gifted and Talented specialist.

Grades 5-6

Students identified for pull-out programming will meet in small groups with the gifted and talented specialist as follows: Students meet for two class periods per week with the Gifted and Talented specialist.

Grades 7-8

Middle school students in grades 7 and 8 who have been identified as gifted receive differentiated instruction within their core content classes and may participate in learning opportunities such as independent projects or flexible group activities. Students may qualify for specialized placement in specific subject areas.

NOTIFICATION

EXIT CRITERIA / CONTINUED PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN GIFTED PROGRAM

An enrolled student who is experiencing difficulty in gifted and/or general education courses or no longer meets the pre-established criteria, may be exited from the gifted program. Ongoing assessment will be used to monitor student progress and ability to maintain the rigor and expectations of the program. Progress reports will be used to record a student's growth toward meeting expectations and communicate any concerns during the school year.

PLACEMENT APPEAL PROCESS

Parents or guardians of students found ineligible for services within the gifted program have the right to appeal the decision. Written notification must be given to the building principal and the gifted and talented teacher stating the request for appeal along with any support for reconsideration. The screening committee will review the child's information to determine if further screening or consideration is required. The committee will inform the parent(s)/ guardian(s) of their decision within 10 school days of the appeal.

STUDENT CONTRACT

Mount Laurel School District
2020-21 Gifted Academic Program Learning Contract

Student Name:

School:

Grade:

G.A.P. Teacher:

Please review the list below and sign this learning contract to acknowledge you understand the requirements of the program. Your child’s G.A.P. specialist will actively communicate any concerns with you and answer any questions regarding the program.

My child and I understand that:

- G.A.P. services may differ from one student to another depending upon student needs.
- They will attend G.A.P. sessions as scheduled.
- If they experience academic difficulty in their general education studies, they may be asked to withdraw for a period of time.
- All required assignments must be turned in on time in both the general education classroom and small group environment.
- Any classroom work missed while participating in G.A.P. must be made up for the content area teacher.
- They will actively participate in a small group setting.

Student’s Signature

Date

Parent’s Signature

Date

We have chosen NOT to receive Gifted and Talented services at this time.

Student’s Signature

Date

Parent’s Signature

Date

RESOURCES

New Jersey Department of Education Definition - Giftedness:
https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/S3500/3258_R1.HTM

New Jersey Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act:
https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2018/Bills/A5000/4710_R1.HTM

Mount Laurel Township Board Policy [6171.2]

The board of education shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations and educational services are provided to gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12 to enable them to participate in, benefit from, and demonstrate knowledge and application of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at the instructional level of the student.

Gifted and Talented Program

The board of education directs that the chief school administrator and appropriately trained and qualified staff members designated by the chief school administrator shall:

- A. Ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed for students who are gifted and talented;
- B. Make provisions for an ongoing kindergarten through grade 12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity, or a specific academic area. The district shall ensure equal access to a continuum of gifted and talented education services. The identification process shall include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with individualized education plans (IEPs) or 504 plans;
- C. Develop and document appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment, and including, but not limited to, additional education activities such as academic competitions, guest speakers, and lessons with a specialist;
- D. Take into consideration the Gifted Programming Standards, Position Statements, and White Papers of the National Association for Gifted Children in identifying and serving gifted and talented students;
- E. Provide the time and resources to develop, review, and enhance instructional tools with modifications for helping gifted and talented students acquire and demonstrate mastery of the required knowledge and skills specified by the standards at the instructional level of the student; and
- F. Actively assist and support professional development for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders in the area of gifted and talented instruction including their efforts to meet mandatory professional development requirements (see board policy 4131/4131.1 Staff Development, Inservice Education, Visitation, Conferences and N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3).

Gifted and Talented Curriculum and Instruction

The board shall provide appropriate kindergarten-through-grade-12 (K-12) educational services for gifted and talented students.

The chief school administrator shall develop and the board shall approve criteria for identifying all gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12. The identification process shall include multiple measures. Gifted and talented students shall be provided with appropriate instructional adaptations and services to encourage development of their special abilities in achieving the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

The chief school administrator or designee shall ensure that the curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The curriculum and instruction shall provide educational challenges to students identified as gifted and talented and shall be reviewed regularly.

Curriculum and instruction shall be designed with consideration for the individual learning styles of each student as well as the capacity of a gifted student to create concepts, respond to stimuli in a unique and creative manner, and develop higher levels of thinking. Appropriate accommodations, instructional adaptations, and/or modifications as determined by the IEP or 504 team shall be made for students with disabilities or 504 plans.

Because early discovery of a gift or talent is important, it is essential that the identification of these students be carried on as a continuing process, since special abilities and skills appear at different times in the development of many children.

The chief school administrator shall coordinate development of appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment. The board directs the chief school administrator to take into consideration the prekindergarten through grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing school and district programs for gifted and talented students.

The chief school administrator shall devise indicators of achievement to evaluate the success of each program presented to the board for adoption.

The chief school administrator shall take the appropriate measures to ensure that minority and female students are not underrepresented in gifted and talented or accelerated/advanced courses.

Coordinator for Gifted and Talented Services

The state coordinator for gifted and talented services appointed by the commissioner of education, shall be responsible for reviewing the information about gifted and talented services provided by the district. The chief school administrator or designee shall file a report with the coordinator on a schedule that coincides with the district's New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) review. The report shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. The gifted and talented continuum of services, policies, and procedures implemented in the school district;
- B. The total number of students receiving gifted and talented services in each grade level kindergarten through grade 12 disaggregated by race, gender, special education designation, and English language learner designation;
- C. The professional development opportunities provided for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders about gifted and talented students, their needs, and educational development; and
- D. The number of staff employed by the school district whose job responsibilities include identification of and providing services to gifted and talented students.

Complaint Process

Any individual who believes that the district has not complied with the provisions in the law or administrative code related to gifted and talented services may file a complaint with the board of education. The complaint shall be submitted in writing to the board office. The chief school administrator or designee shall take the necessary actions to correct or remediate the complaint and report such actions to the board. The board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the district's action in the matter.

If the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction or the individual is not satisfied by the written decision of the board, the individual may then file a petition of appeal of the board's written decision to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with law ([N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9](#)) and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.

This complaint policy shall be linked to the homepage of the board's website.

Information Available on Website

Detailed information shall be available on the district website regarding the policies and procedures used to identify students as gifted and talented and the continuum of services offered to gifted and talented students. The information shall include the criteria used for consideration for eligibility for the gifted and talented services, including the multiple measures used in the identification process to match a student's needs with services, and any applicable timelines in the identification process.